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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Written statement submitted by the World Federation of Democratic Youth, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[28 February 1997]

1. Fundamental human rights violations, including serious violations of the right to life, continue unabated in the remote and isolated Nuba Mountain area of the Sudan, often without any coverage or reporting by external reporters or human rights groups. Major perpetrators of the human rights violations are the regular army and Government-backed militia such as the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) and the Mujahidin. Although WFDY has received a large number of reliable testimonies on fundamental rights violations, well-documented evidence of such violations was collected by a WFDY delegation from people in the following villages:

(a) Kuda area. On 23 March 1996, the government military and paramilitary forces burned the season's harvest (sorghum, sesame, groundnuts and other produce). Agriculture is the only source of income and living for the people of this area. The Government's act rendered the people destitute and in desperate need of external help and assistance;

(b) Tiri area. The government forces stormed the only church in the area, stole 13 stools and other belongings and destroyed the pictures and other religious symbols. Bullet marks were identified in the church's walls. Such acts also have racist manifestations: on other occasions government military forces have burned down mosques as well as churches, reportedly shouting racist slogans against the black people of the area;

(c) Tandri and Tabaldia areas. The government forces have burned down all buildings and belongings. Government forces usually enter the target area to steal valuables and then burn down buildings. Other belongings such as agricultural produce are said to be destroyed in toto. WFDY believes that the reason behind this deliberate policy is to forcibly displace inhabitants of the Nuba Mountains in order to replace them with other ethnic groups and to resettle the Nuba in other parts of the country according to government plans (usually in semi-desert areas). Many cases of mass killings and death of civilians were reported, whether through indiscriminate military operations, extrajudicial executions or due to war-related reasons. Many villages were totally uprooted or deserted by the original inhabitants.

Rape

2. Many cases of rape of young women and girls were reported to the delegation. The number of rape cases was very high in 1995. After mounting external pressure on the Government to improve its human rights record, fewer rape cases were reported in 1996. Rape is especially rampant in the areas of Mendi, Rabka and El Hamra where the government forces have a noticeable regular presence. Rape was usually committed by several men who, without exception, were members of the government military forces or paramilitary militia. Perpetrators of this heinous crime are escorted free with impunity.

Forced labour

3. Throughout 1996, forced labour was largely practised by the government army, especially in the areas of Mendi, Rabka, El Hamra and El Ehimir. Government forces usually herd tens of young men and women on a daily basis to the military camps where they are forced to perform support and domestic services for the army. By the end of the day, soldiers usually keep some

young women to spend the night at the military camps for sexual comfort while the rest are released without payment or compensation. On many occasions soldiers carry young people with them to other locations in the north to perform domestic services for households.

El Rahmania camp

4. In its deliberate policy to change the demographic status of the Nuba Mountains, the Government established El Rahmania camp in 1992. The camp is located about 10 km to the north of Tallodi, towards Abu Giba and Mendi. Because of the tight security measures surrounding this camp, no detailed information about the conditions inside it is available. WFDY believes that the camp is meant to accommodate the deliberately displaced people as a first step to transferring them to other parts of the country. People who were forcibly removed from their villages in other parts of the Nuba Mountains are detained in this camp for about three months for screening and indoctrination. After this period they are transferred to peace camps or peace villages under the control of the Government where small quotas of food, etc. are distributed by the Government-controlled Islamic relief agencies. In the peace camps people are forced to change their religious allegiance. The method is simple: food and other necessities are distributed to those who declare Islam as their religion and attend daily prayers, which is the usual time for food distribution. Adults as well as children are given new Islamic names and forced to practise Islamic rituals.

Forced conscription of children

5. Children of all ages, especially those at the secondary-school level, are forced to undergo military training and Islamic indoctrination before entering schools. Military training, which ranges from three months to six months, is conducted in the war zones to ensure speedy dispatch of these hastily trained recruits to the battlefields. The period can be extended indefinitely. Some students never returned to school again and instead became soldiers for the rest of their lives. The rate of casualties among these recruits is very high due to the harsh training conditions and the lack of medical care.

6. WFDY calls on the Government of the Sudan to:

(a) Put an immediate end to all violations of fundamental rights in the Nuba Mountains, in particular the right to life, and apply international standards in the treatment of civilians in the war zones. It should also stop the forcible transfer of people from their areas;

(b) Open the Nuba Mountain areas to external relief operations and to human rights monitoring, including visits by officials of the United Nations.

7. We call on the United Nations and the international community at large to extend all possible help and assistance to the people of the Nuba Mountains. The United Nations should take all necessary measures to ensure that this area is covered by Operation Life Line Sudan. There is urgent need for health-care facilities, medical doctors and midwives, as well as teachers and educational and training materials.